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Defense Acts To Edit Some Of Viet Study

By Sanford J. Ungar

Washington Post Staff Writer

The Pentagon has intervened with a Boston publisher in an attempt to have some sections deleted from a nearly complete but officially unauthorized edition of its secret study of the Vietnam war.

The book is scheduled for release Oct. 17.

Two men, identifying themselves as part of a "special team" working with J. Fred Buzhardt, general legal counsel to Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird, made an unannounced visit to the Boston headquarters of Beacon Press on Friday morning, seeking the publisher's cooperation with the government.

Arnold Tovell, editor in chief at Beacon, confirmed yesterday that a second meeting has been scheduled for Monday morning in Boston, when three other representatives from the Pentagon will specify the parts of the study the Defense Department would like deleted.

Tovell said the firm would not alter its plans before consulting with Sen. Mike Gravel (D-Alaska), who provided the Pentagon papers for Beacon's four-volume edition.

Reportedly consisting of 95 per cent of the secret Vietnam war narrative, the Beacon edition is formally billed as the official record of a special subcommittee hearing called by Gravel at midnight on June 29 for the specific purpose of releasing the Pentagon papers.

Sources at Beacon said yesterday that should a decision be made to delete parts of the study, blank pages might be left in the book to mark the omissions.

Scheduled for an initial printing of about 15,000 copies in paperback and 5,000 in hard cover, the Beacon book is already in production at an estimated cost of \$100,000.

When published, it is expected to be the only version of almost the entire Pentagon

study (including 25 per cent of the internal government documents that accompanied it) which is generally available to the public. Despite a Supreme Court decision in June affirming the right of The Washington Post, The New York Times and other newspapers to publish articles based on the study, the Defense Department has continued to refuse to release it.

The two Defense Department representatives, Robert L. Jones and Paul T. Spalla, who wore civilian clothes, appeared at the publisher's office next to the statehouse in Boston with a letter of introduction from Buzhardt.

As Tovell described them yesterday, "they went out of their way to make it clear they were not lawyers and were not from the Justice Department."

But he added that Jones and Spalla refused to specify their titles in the Defense Department. A check with the Pentagon press office and other sources yesterday failed to turn up anyone by those names in the general legal counsel's office.

During a half-hour session with Tovell, Beacon Press director Gobin Stair, two other Beacon officials and two attorneys representing the publishers, the men said they were "part of a team checking into the Pentagon papers generally," one of the participants in the meeting said yesterday.

Jones and Spalla did not ask to see any of the galley proofs of the book, Beacon attorney Harvey A. Silverglade said, but "seemed to be on a diplomatic mission. They didn't seem to know much about the Pentagon papers."

The two Pentagon emissaries stressed, however, that they were concerned not about avoiding political embarrassment that might result from the book, but were concerned about matters concerning intelligence which might be revealed.

They did not specify which parts of the study were considered dangerous, leaving that to three others—whom they did not identify—with "intimate knowledge" of the Vietnam war study.

Beacon agreed to the second meeting on Monday, Silverglade said, because "they are willing to listen as citizens and reasonable men."

Gravel, reached yesterday, stressed that under his agreement with Beacon, "I have editorial control over what's in there. I'd be happy to re-evaluate any or all of it."

The senator, who has contended that the administration is seeking to interfere with his plans for the Pentagon papers, said "maybe they should have contacted me to go over anything they feel is sensitive and should not be released."

It also was learned yesterday that Howard R. Webber, Director of the MIT Press, had been summoned to Washington last week for a meeting with Buzhardt's office.

Webber, who was approached with Gravel's copy of the Pentagon papers before Beacon press, a nonprofit publishing arm of the Unitarian-Universalist Association, said at the he "found it puzzling" that he had been questioned about the nature of the Beacon edition.